



The Tolopka Tattler



2014 Spanning the Globe Edition
"All the News It Gives Us Fits to Print"

SPANNING THE GLOBE to bring you the constant variety of life's events ... the thrill of a perfect sixteenth note run¹ ... the agony of unexpected blue notes² ... and the human drama of keeping five people in line while turning a parade corner³ ... This is "Tolopka's Wide World of Music and Other Fun Stuff!"

Spanning the West Coast – Mexico!

We kicked off the year by dropping in our neighbors to the south.⁴

The key part of the plan was a National Geographic Cruise in the Sea of Cortez, but we went down a few days early for a little R&R in Cabo San Lucas. Our hotel was lovely with a great view of El Arco but we



A find on Isla Santa Margarita

never got fully into the Cabo spirit, likely because we're no longer in our twenties⁵ and prefer to remain relatively sober. But sun in January is always attractive to Oregonians and we found a couple of tasty little restaurants and generally chilled.



Beware the magnificent frigate birds!!!

Couple days later we drove up the peninsula, wandering the art galleries in Todos Santos and lunching at the Hotel California before meeting our cruise

group at the La Paz airport for the cross-peninsula bus ride to Puerto San Carlos where we boarded our ship (whew!).

The *Sea Bird* is a bit smaller than, oh, say, a Royal Caribbean ship – sixty guests versus a couple thousand. The ship's amenities are basic, but the scenery & wildlife in the Sea of Cortez are spectacular. On Zodiac boat rides in Bahia Magdalena we got *very* up close and personal with gray whales and their calves (Steve actually got to "pet" one of the calves). Elsewhere we saw birds galore, hiked islands occupied only by the local flora and fauna, waved at our hotel as we rounded El Arco at Cabo San Lucas, and totally



Say hello to our little crab buddy

annoyed a little ghost crab. In the Sea of Cortez we saw dolphins riding the ship's bow wave, then listened via hydrophone to humpback songs as they breached just off the ship's bow. To her



Cactus in bloom

amazement, Janet even got to see the "green flash" at sunrise one morning.⁶ We even got a chance to do a little snorkeling. Wonderful trip, and we survived being disconnected from the rest of the world.

San Francisco!

In February, The Beat Goes On Marching Band headed to San Francisco's Chinese New Year Parade. Over a million



Humpback whale breaching – wow!

¹ Seldom.

² Frequent.

³ In your dreams!

⁴ Nice try, but we actually went farther than Beaverton.

⁵ Truthfully we were never like that in our twenties either!

⁶ Steve doesn't do sunrise

people lined the streets of China Town to watch this colorful event with prancing dragons and dozens of performing groups.



Palace of Fine Arts & Golden Gate pose with us

While in the planning stages of the trip, the parade organizers asked what music we planned to play. Steve submitted a list of our usual rock 'n' roll charts and they

wistfully said “Gee, we’d really like it if you could play Chinese New Year’s music.” We dug deep in our arsenal of Chinese New Year’s music and came up with ... nothing!⁷ Eventually the organizers sent a couple of recordings that might work. When Steve asked for sheet music, they had NONE! So he wrote arrangements for two of the pieces that we played in the parade.⁸ We thought the tunes were cherished old folk songs, but later found that one was a featured piece of music from *The Bund*, an 80s Hong Kong nighttime soap about the Shanghai mob.⁹



Things are not always what they seem at The Exploratorium

We also got to spend an afternoon at The Exploratorium, a place Steve has wanted to visit for years. It was worth the wait –

science is cool!!!

Oregon & Washington!

Besides its usual local gigs, TBGO performed at other noteworthy events, quirky and otherwise.

Quirky: A segment of the *Pedal Powered Talk Show* at Oaks Park. On this show, the host rides around on a bike and interviews interesting folks. The segment we shot, billed as “The Most Uneek Interview in the World,” included roller skaters, Abraham Lincoln, llamas, and (of course) a marching band. The episodes are pretty fun and

unlike anything you’d expect. To marvel at our uneekness, check out the August 14, 2014 episode at <http://www.pedaltalkshow.com>.

Otherwise: TBGO’s Oregon Adult Band Festival¹⁰ debut. Bands in the festival are usually quite accomplished

and play mostly classical wind band literature¹¹. We are ... exuberant, and our eclectic 30-minute set included the Doobie Brothers, Ray Charles, J.S. Bach, Lady Gaga, and Tower of Power. Yeah – the contrast was awesome!¹²

Quirky and Otherwise: The Lents Street Fair and Founders Day Parade, featuring the famous¹³ Lents goats, the Bagpiping Unicyclist, and U.S. Senator Ron Wyden! ‘Nuff said—use your fertile imagination!

Classy:¹⁴ One of the coolest gigs this past summer was performing at a Hillsboro Hops baseball game under the baton of Maestro Carlos Kalmar, world-renowned director of the Oregon Symphony. He led the band in the *Star-Spangled Banner* and *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* at the 7th inning stretch; we think it was his first baseball game *and* his first marching band. You better believe this one’s now on our musical résumé!

Quirkiest: And now to the far(thest) end of the spectrum: the World Beard and Moustache Championships, held this year in downtown Portland. Here’s the conversation:

Steve: Ummm ... is this some kind of parade?

WB&MC: Well ... it’s more of a procession. For a parade you have to have a permit.

So we traipsed the sidewalks of downtown Portland with a couple hundred fancy beards and moustaches in tow while rocking out in our usual uninhibited fashion. A bunch of us who don’t normally sport a face forest wore fake moustaches for the occasion, which is tricky while playing saxophone. It’s also the first time we’ve

⁷ C’mon! Did you really believe we’d have that just lying around in our back pocket?

⁸ You can hear them in the Sound & Video section of the band’s website at tbgo.org/soundvid.htm.

⁹ We still don’t know about the other one. If you know anything about *Coach Driver’s Love Song*, we’d love to hear it!

¹⁰ To our delight, it turned out that “Adult” was age-related instead of being a behavioral requirement.

¹¹ We play the equivalent of dime novels.

¹² And the band sounded great!

¹³ Fame is a very broad concept around here.

¹⁴ Hah! Didn’t even tell you that was an option!

And we had a tremendous time. The Grand Opening Parade had nearly 20 performing groups from around the world and was telecast to 200 million viewers. It's the only parade we've ever done that required a 7-hour rehearsal

the previous night. Band members described our time in the staging area with the other groups as "just like being in the Olympics."

Altogether we did four shows in Shanghai, including the Oriental Pearl TV tower, the biggest mall in Shanghai,²² and a "mini-parade" along

Nanjing Road consisting of ... just us!²³

Our China itinerary included the "smaller" city of Suzhou,²⁴ which is one of Portland's "sister cities." We thought it would be fun to do a show there, and our hosts said they'd set it up. When the buses arrived in Suzhou, we discovered our name in lights on a 40-foot billboard. Steve even starred in a 60 second spot on the Suzhou evening news.²⁵ Everywhere we went, the crowds treated us like rock stars— just an amazing performing experience.

Got to do the touristy things too: silk, jade,

pearls, tea plantation, temples, a night cruise on the Huangpu River, acrobat show – our days were definitely packed. Our final stop was three days in Beijing where we saw Tian'an Men Square and the Forbidden City, rode rickshaws through the old part of the city, and feasted on Bei-

jing duck. On our last day we visited the Great Wall. "Sometimes people perform on the Wall; would your band like to do that?" Only one correct answer to that, so we did 20 minutes of American pop to bemused Chinese tourists who

wondered what planet we called home. Talk about an item on the bucket list!

Though China wasn't a place we had considered visiting, we had a great time and highly recommend a visit of your own. If you go, whatever you do, DON'T DRIVE! The road is filled with cars, bikes, scooters, pedestrians, aardvarks, & penguins. OK, those last two were made up, but the roads are so busy that they might be there...

The Road Home (Ahh...)

At home throughout the year, we pursued our other usual (and not so usual) activities.

For reasons we just can't fathom, we are still playing softball. Our team (Who's On First?) finished its worst season ever winning just one game when the other team (obviously stunned by our rumored prowess) didn't show up.

Janet is still bowling and tap dancing.²⁶ She likes the senior bowling league she's in because the folks there are supportive (even when not on the same team) and, as she says, they don't care if she sucks. Tap dancing is on the other end of the spectrum. She's pretty good at it and expects a lot from herself.

In past years, we've played in the pit orchestra for West Sylvan Middle School productions of Broadway plays. This year, Steve played for 'Honk!', a rendition of the ugly duckling tale. The school is the only middle school in the country with a live pit orchestra. The shows are surprisingly good, and the talented kids work hard.

We hope you had a great year and wish you the best for 2015!

The Beat Goes On,

Steve & Janet



Welcome to Suzhou!



Saxes do Louie Louie in the staging area



The Great Wall of ROCK OUT!



Playing to the cameras at the Shanghai Parade



Getting pedaled through Beijing

²² Which, unsurprisingly is BIG!

²³ Plus a LOT of security guards.

²⁴ A mere 11 million people.

²⁵ See it at thebeatgoesonmb.org/press.htm. We think the commentator says "We can't make this stuff up."

²⁶ Though rarely at the same time



Getting acquainted at El Serpentario de La Paz (Mexico)



Shanghai by night from the Huangpu River.
That's the Oriental Pearl Tower where we performed.



Wowing the crowd in Suzhou



On the Shanghai Bund. You can almost hear the 80's theme music!.



Tian'an Men Square



Grand Parade - on the streets of Shanghai for 200 million TV viewers!